

Stone *maṇḍalas* in Nepal

by ADALBERT J. GAIL

In honour of Debala Mitra

Introduction

The stone *maṇḍalas* that will be discussed in this article are unique in the Buddhist world. They are not only confined to Newar Buddhism in the Kathmandu valley, but also to the Buddhist towns of Pāṭan, Kīrtipur and a few other neighbouring villages only.

Like stone or metal sculptures of Mañjuśrī, the embodiment of Buddhist dharma, these *maṇḍalas* called *dharmadhātuvāgīśvaramaṇḍalas*, appear to have been erected in praise of Mañjuśrī, the mythical creator of the Kathmandu valley. Mañjuśrī, represented as a young boy holding a sword and book, in his so-called Arapacana form (Mallmann 1964: 26 f.), combines, iconographically, two theological trends in Hinduism, namely: the general of the gods (Skanda) and Brahmā and Sarasvatī, representatives of wisdom and learning. He is considered the martial defender of Buddhist law (Figs. 35, 61).

In the introduction to his *Étude sur l'iconographie bouddhique* Foucher has precisely described the different stages that the *sādhaka* has to undergo on his path to realising 'le vide ou néant absolu' (*śūnyatā*) and identifying himself with a selected deity ('l'évocation d'une divinité en vue de l'identification de l'évocateur avec elle') (Foucher 1905: 7-11). In order to attain that aim the trainee, as carefully as possible, evokes within himself, an image of the chosen deity, in accordance with a written *sādhana*, an image that he can carry in his mind or that he can look at, i.e. a painted or carved image, etc. The image, however, can also form the centre of a *maṇḍala* inhabited by various deities. In such a case the process of 'entering' the central image presupposes a more complicated procedure.

The *maṇḍalas* surrounding the central deity and his acolytes with various circles of other gods are the subject of Abhayākara Gupta's *Niṣpannayogāvalī* (NSP, between 1075 and 1125 A.D.), a complementary text to the *Sādhanamālā* (see Literature s.v. *Sādhanamālā*). The latter text gives advice on how to meditate on the (central) deity, whereas the NSP only enumerates and describes all the figures that are assembled in a sacred circle (*maṇḍala*). The *dharmadhātu(-vāgīśvara)maṇḍala* is symbol of the Absolute or of Cosmic Consciousness, to which the Buddhists gave different names: 'Matrix

of all the Buddhas (Tathāgatagarbha), Absolute Identity (Tathatā), Basis of All Things (Dharmadhātu), Thingness (Dharmatā) (Tucci 1961: 4).

This absolute entity is also understood as Absolute Consciousness, beginning and end of all individual thinking, which was imagined as light, both in the Upaniṣadic and Buddhist traditions. In a second chapter on the *maṇḍala* as a means of reintegration (pp. 21-47), Tucci asks how the meditator would be able to find his way back from the shattered plurality of his psyche to the *bodhicitta*, the One, Undifferentiated Source. The *maṇḍala* represents the multiplicity of things, it is a map of the cosmos (p. 23), a geometric projection of the world (p. 25).

This multiplicity, comprising good and evil forces, also constitutes the disintegrated psyche of man. So the *maṇḍala* is no longer a cosmogram but a psychocosmogram, the scheme of disintegration from the One to the many and of reintegration from the many to the One, to that Absolute Consciousness, [...]. (P. 25).

We could continue to make a more detailed study of Tucci's learned interpretation of the *maṇḍala*, but I do not believe that his analysis would bring us closer to the function of the stone *maṇḍalas* in the actual practice of the Newar cult. On the contrary, it is very doubtful, if these *maṇḍalas* were ever used in the same manner as the painted ones because their structure is such that the entire *maṇḍala* cannot be viewed from a single position. My investigations have also led to the conclusion that these stone *maṇḍalas* are worshipped in the exact same manner as the idols, with red powder, raw rice, flowers and oil.

Two maṇḍala caityas at Pāṭan

Sometimes treasures lie around undetected for a long time. When Vaidya/Sakya published *Medieval Nepal* in 1970 (Vaidya/Sakya 1970: no. 46), there was good reason for art historians and religion historians to be excited, but nobody was. Admittedly, the treasure was still partially hidden since the authors, while copying the inscriptions from two *caityas* found in close proximity to the most reknown Newar *vihāras* (New.: *bāhā*, *bahī*; Nep.: *bahal*, *bahil*) in the Kathmandu valley, did not reveal the source of the names that they found as labels on small Buddhist images: *maṇḍala* 21 or *dharmadhātuvāgīśvaramaṇḍala* from Niṣpannayogāvalī (NSP).

This collection of *maṇḍalas* has a special connection with Nepal since many images in the Buddhist pantheon of Nepal are portrayed along with descriptions found in the above text (Mevisse 1989). Even closer ties exist between *maṇḍala* 21, devoted to Mañjuśrī represented as Mañjughoṣa in his function as Dharmadhātuvāgīśvara, i.e. Lord of speech and essence of things, and embodiment of Vairocana-Mahāvairocanātmā Mañjughoṣah ⁽¹⁾. Mañjuśrī's special importance is based on a legendary act: using his

⁽¹⁾ NSP p. 65. A French translation of NSP 21 can be found in Mallmann 1964: 82-96.

sword he cut a cleft into the ridge (that is now Cobhar gorge) so that the waters of the valley in the form of a lake could drain off and make place for human inhabitants.

It was Debala Mitra who first observed the connection between the figures of Yotālivicaitya, their inscribed labels and the *NSP* text, and published 19 out of a total of 40 figures with photos. One now has an opportunity to analyse the *maṇḍala* depicted in relation to the one described in *NSP* 21 (Mitra 1997) (Fig. 1).

Although the entire *maṇḍala* text comprises of no less than 224 figures, Yotālivicaitya selects only 40 of them, arranged in one circle, neglecting the 97 Hindu figures who are said to dwell in the forth ring (*caturthe maṇḍale*). The *maṇḍala* represents the 4 Tathāgatas, facing the main directions with the 4 Tārās affiliated to them in the intermediate directions (Figs. 3-6): NE

Locanā, SE Māmākī, SW Pāṇḍarā and NW Tārā⁽²⁾. These figures belong to the inner circle or *garbhamāṇḍala* in *NSP* 21. Taken from the second and the third circle of the *NSP* are 12 female deities and 16 Bodhisattvas. However, the four female deities of music that have been represented do not form part of *maṇḍala* 21, and seem to have been borrowed from some other *maṇḍala* of the *NSP* (Mitra 1997: 388).

Yotālivicaitya in its present form was constructed in N.S. 805 Vaiśākha śukla = 1685 A.D. The Ilānanicaitya, which is considerably smaller, is also from the same period: N.S. 781 = 1661 A.D. (and mentions a reconstruction in N.S. 807 = 1687 A.D.) (Figs. 3-22).

This *caitya* omits the above mentioned 12 plus 4 female deities, and reduces the amount of figures to 28, out of which 24 are placed in the same upper circle, while Lāsya etc. are positioned on a lower level, in accordance with their respective intermediate directions (Figs. 18-21). In addition, on the Ilānanicaitya the four Tathāgatas are repeated again on two levels below that of Lāsya etc. On these levels they appear in human form (Fig. 22), whereas within the *maṇḍala* ring they are represented in their tantric forms.

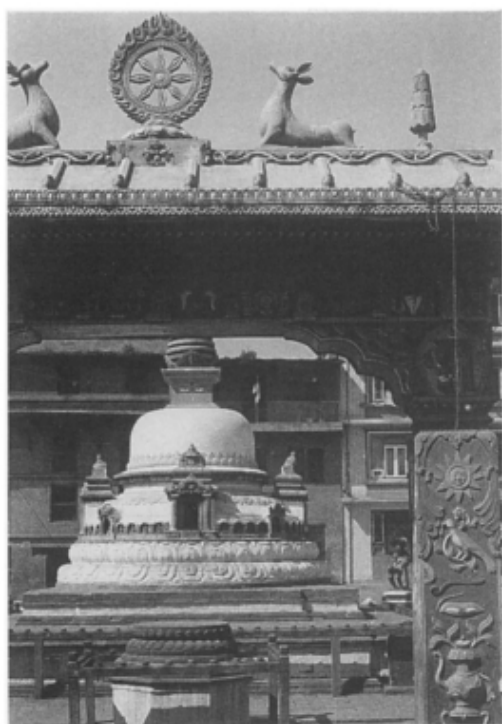


Fig. 1 - Yotālivicaitya: east side and *maṇḍala*.

⁽²⁾ These four figures have been misinterpreted by D. Mitra (1997), who did not detect their female nature.

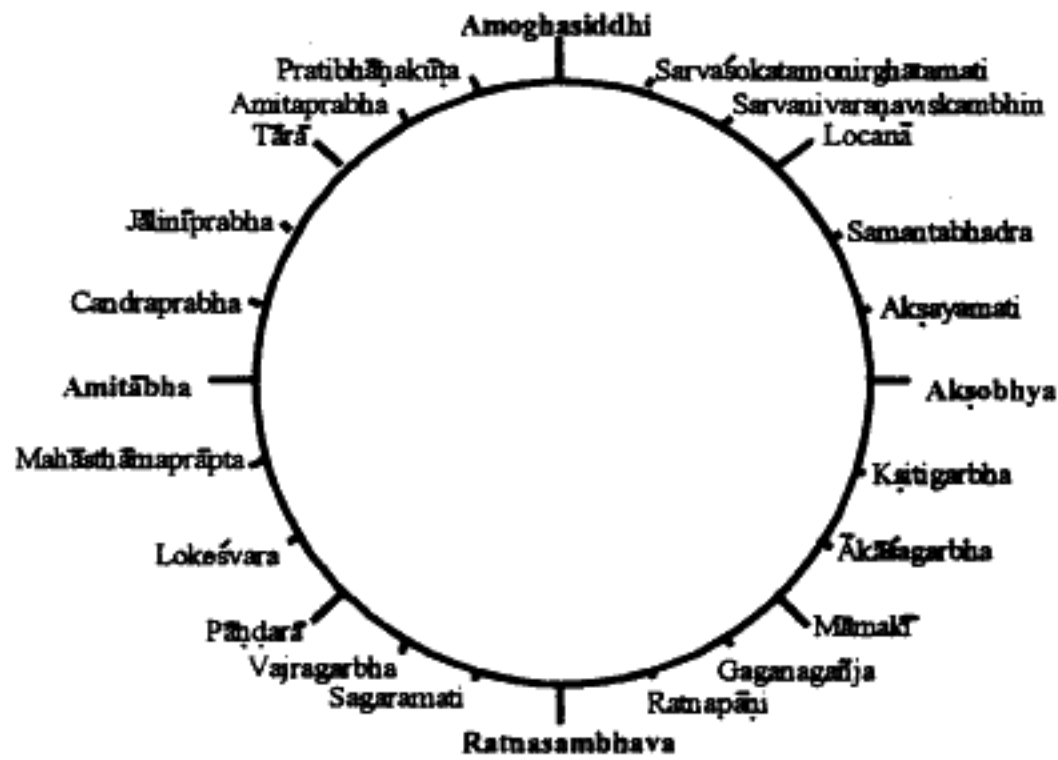


Fig. 2 - Ilānānīcaitya - *maṇḍala* ring.

Although the Ilānānīcaitya is a reduced version in comparison to the Yotālivīcaitya, it is a more faithful realisation of *dharmadhātuvāgiśvaramaṇḍala*, since it omits the 16 Devīs, 4 of whom do not belong to that *maṇḍala* at all. This aspect is by no means peripheral, if we take into consideration the usually octagonal shaped stone blocks, surmounted by a lotus and a round disk, that are found not only in the vicinity of Yotālivīcaitya and Ilānānīcaitya but in almost all the *bāhās* and *bahīs* at Pāṭan.

These *dharmadhātumaṇḍalas* or *dharmadhātu* stone *maṇḍalas* form the focus of our research, although their relationship with the above mentioned *maṇḍala caityas* and simpler *caitya* versions should be kept in mind.

The Standard dharmadhātumaṇḍala

Our first specimen close to the south side of Ilānānīcaitya is a rather late one (N.S. 103(?) = 1910-19), and represents the standard Pāṭan type (Figs. 7, 23). Before going any further, a description of the members of this quasi-architectural structure in traditional Indian terms would seem to be most appropriate. The following description is common to most of the *maṇḍalas* found here (Figs. 24-25). An octagonal platform (*jagatī*) carries a basement consisting of a fillet (*paṭṭikā*), a quarter round profile (*kapota*), wall (*bhitti*, *pāda*) with a short eave (*chāḍya*) beneath its upper edge. On each of the eight faces of the octagon is a niche (*koṣṭha*). Above this basement is a snake (*nāga*) raising its head towards the north — the source of all water in the Kathmandu valley — and encircling a double lotus (*viśvapadma*) surmounted by the



Fig. 3 - Yotālivicaitya: Locanā.



Fig. 4 - Yotālivicaitya: Māmakī.



Fig. 5 - Yotālivicaitya: Pāṇḍarā.



Fig. 6 - Yotālivicaitya: Tārā.



Fig. 7 - Ilānanicaitya with southern (right) and eastern *maṇḍala*.



Fig. 8 - Ilānanicaitya: Navagraha discs and eastern *maṇḍala*.

maṇḍala proper, i.e. a flat disk (*cakra*) with incised decorations, geometrical, floral, symbolical and, in many cases, figural as well. The outer three circles of such a *maṇḍala* almost invariably depict the flame (*jvālā*), thunderbolt (*vajra*) and lotus leaf (*padmapattra*) pattern in sequence (Fig. 26). The symbolism of this has been interpreted by Bowker (1997: 610) as follows:

All *maṇḍalas* follow a precise symbolic format. Their circular shape, indicating an all-including pervasion, consist first of an outer ring of flames. This lends the area a protective nature, and as the yogin visualizes his entry into the *maṇḍala*, his impurities are symbolically burnt. A second circle consist of a ring of vajras, symbolizing the indestructible quality of enlightenment. [...] A final ring of lotus petals signifies the purity of the land the yogin now enters.



Fig. 9 - Ilānanicaitya: Akṣobhya Tathāgata.

The inner circles are much less canonized than the three outer circles. In our case a row of flowers and auspicious symbols is followed by a gate-like structure in the cardinal directions and a series of square *maṇḍalas* (Fig. 26), the innermost one is divided by 9 cases (Fig. 27). The corner cases incised with circles symbolically represent the 4 Tārās, while the five other cases are filled with rosettes. The central one represents Mañjuḥśa, and the cardinal ones the Tathāgatas.

The even later stone *maṇḍala* on the eastern side of Ilānanicaitya (N.S. 1099) replaces the ninefold *garbhamaṇḍala* by a lotus petal framed medallion encircling a seated, single-headed, eight-armed Mañjuśrī with a raised sword (*khadga*, proper right) and book (*pustaka*, proper left) in his upper two hands (Figs. 28-29). Tunnel-like corridors connect elegant outer gates with Mañjuśrī's mansion (*kūṭāgāra*). We will later make a more detailed study of the *maṇḍala* proper. However, for the time being we would like to return to the octagonal basement framed by rows of lotus petals beneath the *chāḍya* and above the socle (*paṭṭikā* and *kapota*) (Fig. 23).

Each niche is framed by two fluted and girdled pilasters with a foot decorated with a vessel (*pūrnaghaṭa*), connected by an arch (*torana*) decorated with a pair of *makaras* as well as *nāgas* that appear to be grasped in the mouth of a central demon-like figure



Fig. 10 - Ilānanicaitya: Māmakī Ākāśagarbha Kṣitigarbha.



Fig. 11 - Ilānanicaitya: Ratnapāṇi Gaganagaṇja Māmakī.



Fig. 12 - Ilānāicaitya: Pāṇḍarā Vajragarbha Sagaramati.



Fig. 13 - Ilānāicaitya: Mahāsthāmaprāpta Avalokiteśvara Pāṇḍarā.



Fig. 14 - Ilānanicaitya: Tārā Jālinīprabha Candraprabha.



Fig. 15 - Ilānanicaitya: Pratibhānakūṭa Amitaprabha (here: Adiprabha) Tārā.



Fig. 16 - Ilānāicaitya: Locanā Sarvanivaraṇaviṣkambhin Sarvaśokatamonirghāṭamati (after anointment, *lepāna*).



Fig. 17 - Ilānāicaitya: Akṣayamati Samantabhadra Locanā (after anointment, *lepāna*).



Fig. 18 - Ilānānīcaitya: Lāsya (southeast).



Fig. 19 - Ilānānīcaitya: Mālā (southwest).



Fig. 20 - Ilānānīcaitya: Gītā (northwest).



Fig. 21 - Ilānānīcaitya: Nṛtyā (northeast).

grāsamukha). The sill of the niche is decorated with a carpet between two star-shaped flowers. Inside the niches are two-armed male figures wearing a skirt (*paridhāna*), necklace (*bāra*), crown (*mukuṭa*) and a hanging shawl (*uttarīya*), and carrying different emblems in their hands. The identification of these figures was by no means an easy task, for various reasons.

Identity of the Eight Bodhisattvas

Since the entire structure is conceived and called a *dharmadhātumaṇḍala*, my first idea was that these eight male deities who looked like Bodhisattvas were probably selected from the 16 Bodhisattvas of NSP 21 (*dharmadhātuvāgīśvaramaṇḍala*). This was an assumption that proved to be wrong because one of these figures was clearly identifiable as Mañjuśrī — as Arapacana on the western side (Fig. 35) — who, however, is not a member of the group of 16 Bodhisattvas.

I then tried to identify the other Bodhisattvas whose identity seemed to be clear without any further investigation. This was Avalokiteśvara/Padmapāṇi on the east (Fig. 31) and Samantabhadra on the south, whose image conformed iconographically to the labelled Samantabhadra on Yotālivicaitya (Fig. 38) and Ilānanicaitya (Fig. 17). Hypothetically, I compared these figures and that of Vajrapāṇi in the SW (Fig. 34: with a *vajra* in his right hand and an object that looked like a *padma-sthita-ardha-vajra* in his left) with the lists of Bodhisattvas in the NSP.

It was now that my attention was directed to the eight Bodhisattvas in Akṣobhyamaṇḍala⁽³⁾ (NSP, *maṇḍala* 2, pp. 5-7), where the above mentioned four and four additional Bodhisattvas were referred to. However, the directions prescribed

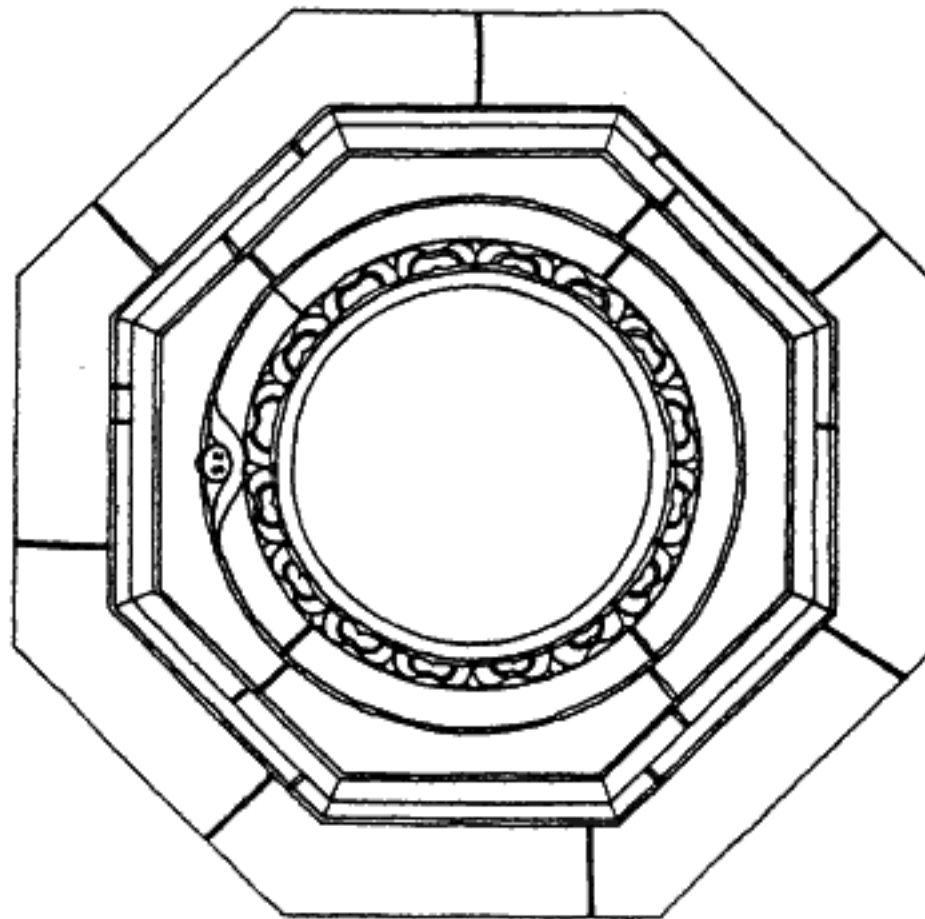
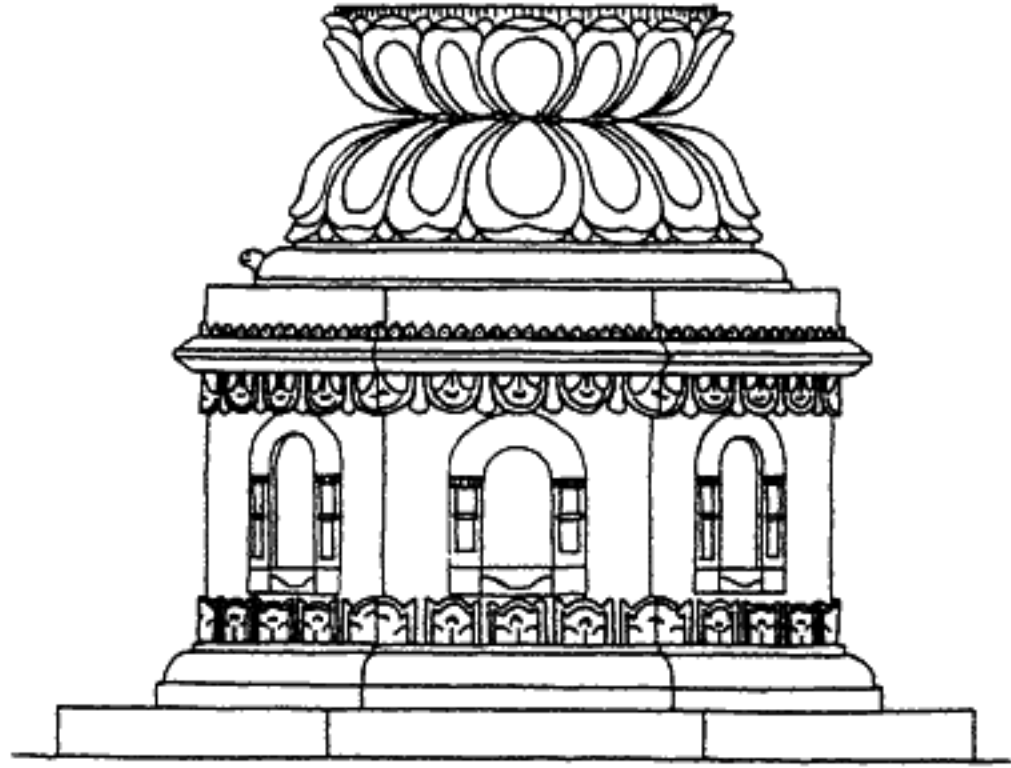


Fig. 22 - Ilānanicaitya: Amitābha (middle level).

⁽³⁾ The importance of the eight Bodhisattvas of NSP 2 in Orissan Buddhism has been underlined by D. Mitra (1996). On the concept of Eight Bodhisattvas see further Granoff 1968-69 and Pal 1972-73. On the Eight-Bodhisattvas concept at Ellora see Malandra 1993: 75-79.



Fig. 23 - Ilānālicaitya: *dharmadhātu maṇḍala* on east side.



Figs. 24-25 - *dharmadhātuvāgiśvaramaṇḍala* — side view and view on *maṇḍala* proper.

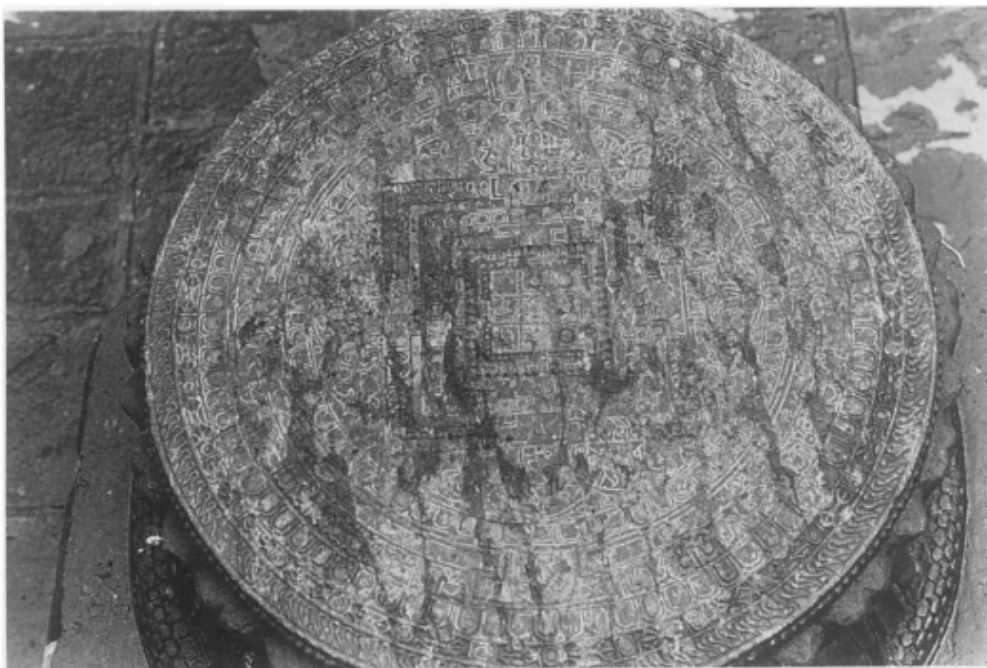


Fig. 26 - Ilānānicaitya: *maṇḍala* proper of *dharmadhātumaṇḍala* on south side.



Fig. 27 - Ilānānicaitya: detail of Fig. 26.

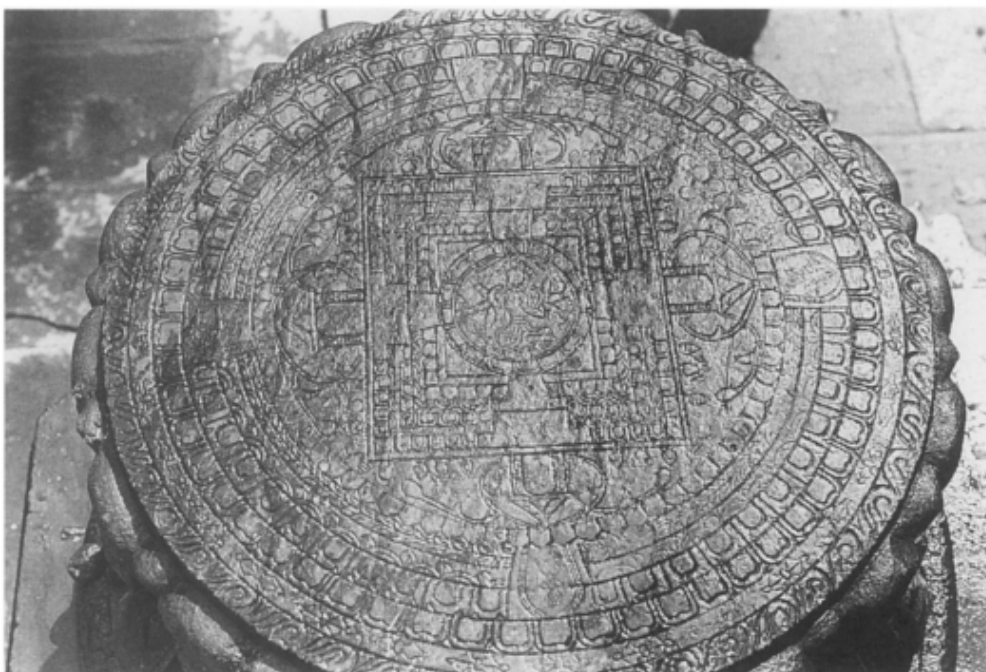


Fig. 28 - Ilānālicaitya: *maṇḍala* proper of *dharmadhātumaṇḍala* on east side.



Fig. 29 - Ilānālicaitya: detail of Fig. 28.



Fig. 30 - Ilāṇanicaitya: south *maṇḍala*:
Ākāśagarbha.



Fig. 31 - Ilāṇanicaitya: south *maṇḍala*:
Lokeśvara.



Fig. 32 - Ilāṇanicaitya: south *maṇḍala*:
Maitreya.



Fig. 33 - Ilāṇanicaitya: south *maṇḍala*:
Samantabhadra.



Fig. 34 - Ilāṇanicaitya: south *maṇḍala*:
Vajrapāṇi.



Fig. 35 - Ilāṇanicaitya: south *maṇḍala*:
Mañjuśrī (Arapacana).



Fig. 36 - Ilāṇanicaitya: south *maṇḍala*:
Sarvanivaraṇaviṣkambhin.



Fig. 37 - Ilāṇanicaitya: south *maṇḍala*:
Kṣitigarbha.



Fig. 38 - Yotālivicaitya: Akṣayamati Samantabhadra.

for them in the *maṇḍala* ⁽⁴⁾, were not in accordance with our *maṇḍala*, the Bodhisattva disposition of which can be seen in the following chart:

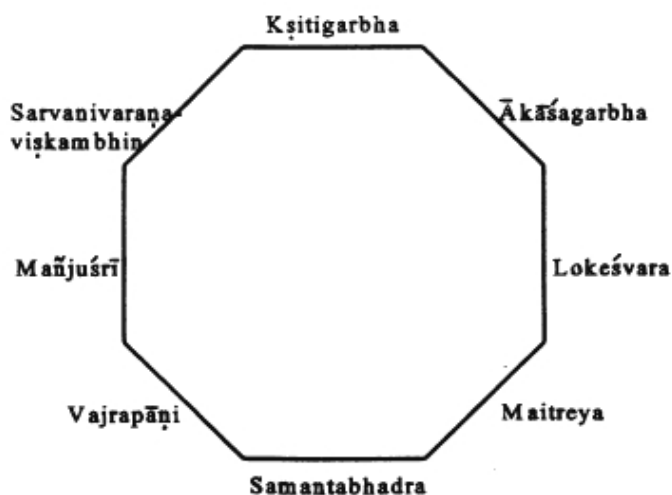


Fig. 39 - Distribution of 8 Bodhisattvas on stone *maṇḍalas*.

⁽⁴⁾ NSP 2 — east: Maitreya/Kṣitigarbha; south: Vajrapāṇi/Khagarbha; west: Lokeśvara/Mañjughoṣa; north: Sarvanivaraṇaviṣkambhin/Samantabhadra.

When comparing both the text and the stone *maṇḍala*, Lokeśvara and Samantabhadra appeared to be located on the wrong side. The next step was to find out, whether the remaining four Bodhisattvas could be identified at all with the remaining four names in NSP 2: Kṣitigarbha, Ākāśagarbha, Maitreya and Sarvanivaraṇaviṣkambhin. The figure on the northeast carrying three balls on a lotus, and holding a few smaller balls in his *varada*-right could well be identified with Ākāśagarbha (Fig. 30) from Ilānāicaitya (Fig. 10) and NSP 21 (*sarvaratnavarṣin-cintāmaṇi*), with the three balls signifying the three jewels (*triratna*). A difficult candidate was the figure in the NW sheltered by a five-hooded *nāga* (*pañca-phāṇa-nāga*) well known from Amoghasiddhi representations (Fig. 36). Here the solution was found through a remark in NSP 2 that the 8 Bodhisattvas should be similar to their spiritual lords (*ete 'ṣṭau svakuleśa-samāḥ*, p. 6). Belonging to the north, Amoghasiddhi is Sarvanivaraṇaviṣkambhin's *kuleśa*. Sarvanivaraṇaviṣkambhin's emblem on the right, carried on a lotus, could well be a *pāśa* ⁽²⁾, while his second emblem, a flag marked with a *viśvavajra*, is often misunderstood or neglected. If we continue reading the injunctions of NSP 2, a solution can also be found for the 7th Bodhisattva normally standing on the southeast: *Kintu Maitreyasya pradhāna-kareṇa sa-pallava-nāgakeśara-kusumam-cakrāṅkitam*. In the southeast niche we find a person who holds a tendril with a blossom like a *cakra* in his left hand (Fig. 32). His right hand is in the *varada* pose and holds, underlining its symbolism, a lotus (*padma*) with three jewels similar to Ākāśagarbha's proper left side (Fig. 30).

The Bodhisattva on the north is the most problematic one. His right hand is in *varada* and his left hand holds what appears to be a flaming sword. In NSP 21 Kṣitigarbha is presented as *dakṣiṇena kṛta-bhūsparśo vāmenābjastha-kalpadruma-dharaḥ*. The deviating hand gesture does not really present any problems since a standing human being cannot touch the earth. However, is it conceivable that the flaming sword could represent a wrongly understood *kalpadruma*? This is definitely not the only explanation possible. Substantial deviations and changes in the emblems occurred often, especially, if we keep in mind the methods used by the craftsmen and artists in the Kathmandu valley. The artist did not work with neither a written text as a guide in his hand nor with a learned Brahmin or *vajrācārya* (the Newar Buddhist counterpart of a Brahmin). They worked from memory or copied from other existing *maṇḍalas*. Both sources, however, are fallacious. Neither our memory nor a given model is completely reliable. Copying from existing objects of art has functioned for centuries like the 'silent post' game. A word whispered by the first person in the ear of his neighbour is usually very different from the word understood and spoken aloud by the final person in the chain.

Thus, morphologically related symbols (tree → flaming sword; jewel-wheel-sun-moon) could easily undergo overlapping and confusions, confusions that could also

(2) A confusion of Amoghasiddhi with Amoghapāśa could be taken into account.

relate to the position of figures. The well known Bodhisattvas such as Mañjuśrī or Lokeśvara, or Sarvanivaraṇaviṣkambhin (*nāgaphaṇa*) are much less often subject to changes of position than the less known and less characteristic figures.

Maitreya has been the victim of many iconographical changes in Nepales stone sculpture. The Nāgbāhā stele shows him, according to Indian tradition, with *kamaṇḍalu* (Slusser 1982: pl. 472), numerous *caityas* represent him, in his capacity of the next Buddha, similar to Śākyamuni, but wearing a pleated robe. He holds the hem of the *saṅghātī* near the left shoulder (Pal 1974: fig. 16; Slusser 1982: pl. 277), which cannot be conceived as a characteristic gesture of Maitreya ⁽⁶⁾ since this same gesture is seen on the figure of Śākyamuni on the south side of Nāgbāhā *caitya* (Pal 1974: fig. 171). This gesture does not seem to have any symbolical significance.

This completes the identification of our set of eight Bodhisattvas. Their location on the *dharmadhātuvāgīśvaramaṇḍala* (Fig. 39) seems to be the standard type at Pāṭan.

Morphological Sequence — Earliest Examples: Yotālivicaitya and Pimbāhā

Our intention to trace the earliest examples of the three-dimensional *maṇḍalas* would first bring us back to the Yotālivicaitya, reconstructed in 1685 A.D. (Fig. 1).

Between a gate on the eastern side of the *caitya* itself a rather massive *dharmadhātumaṇḍala* has been found with its surface (*maṇḍala-cakra*) almost completely corroded. The body of the *maṇḍala* shows certain peculiarities which, when viewed from a later period, appear to be rather archaic features:

- a) in contrast to the *dhātumaṇḍalas* analysed above the Yotālivicaitya *maṇḍala* lacks the niches with 8 Bodhisattvas (Fig. 40);
- b) the serpent encircling the double lotus is smooth, not scaly as in most 19th and 20th century examples;
- c) the *chādyā* (eave) that we observed at the *maṇḍala* south to Ilānanicaitya (Fig. 23) appears in a reduced form, i.e. it looks more like a ridged torus.

Chronologically the *maṇḍala* most closely related to this *caitya* is a unique piece positioned on the eastern side of Pimbāhā (Fig. 41), erected in N.S. 810 = 1690 A.D. according to the inscriptional evidence on the *maṇḍala* itself, which also mentions the ruling king Yoganarendramalla (1684-1705 A.D.).

In two respects, however, the embellishment of that *maṇḍala* differs from the Yotālivicaitya *maṇḍala*.

- 1. A simple quarter round roll cornice (*kapota*) replaces the *nāga*.
- 2. Between *kapota* and lotus the *dharmadhātumaṇḍala* is equipped with an additional octagonal zone, each face embellished with three keyhole shaped niches enclosing seated figures. Almost all of these figures, however, have been violently destroyed.

⁽⁶⁾ Locke (1985: 8) believes it to be *viśvavyākaraṇamudrā*.

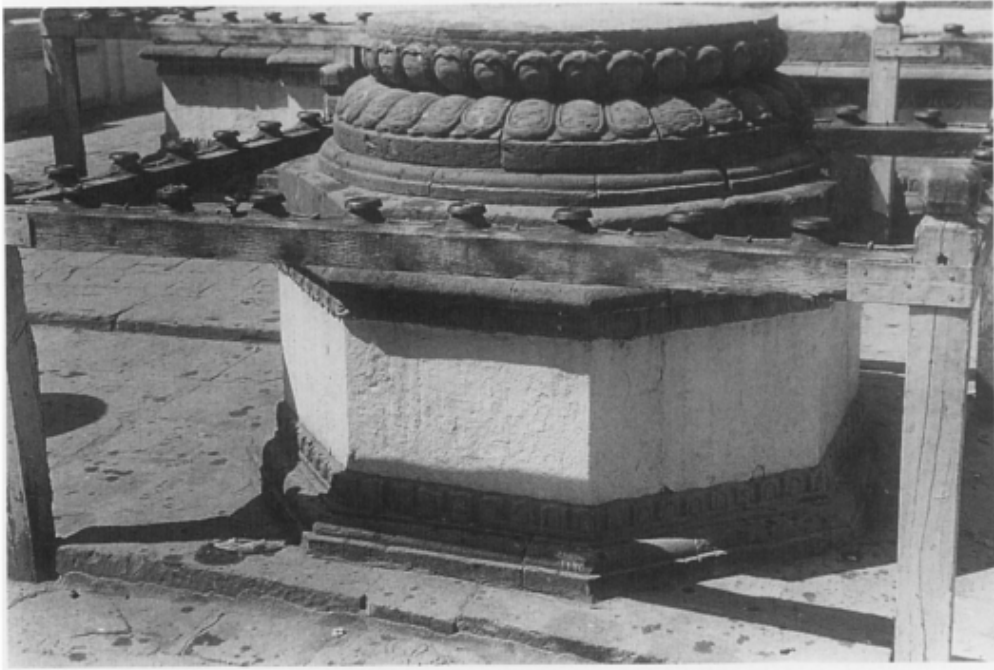


Fig. 40 - Yotālivicaitya: *dharmadhātumaṇḍala*.



Fig. 41 - Pimbāhā: *dharmadhātumaṇḍala*.



Fig. 42 - Pimbāhā: west side of *maṇḍala*: Śrī-Dharmajoti.

A label beneath the middle figure on the west side identifies the images as Śrī Dharmajoti (Fig. 42), also mentioned in the inscription as the main priest of the inauguration ceremony, assisted by Śrī Ratnakara and Śrī Māhāmuni (sic!). It seems possible that both were portrayed in the (now) empty niches on both sides of Dharmajoti. The remaining 21 niches were either devoted to personalities of the *dharmadhātuvāgīśvaramaṇḍala* (comparable to Ilānāicaitya) or to other members of the *saṅgha*. Whether we prefer the one or other possibility, this decorated zone appears unique among all *dharmadhātumaṇḍalas* that I had the opportunity to analyse.

Very distinct from this early Pāṭan group is the well known example on the eastern periphery of the platform of the Svayambhūnāth (Fig. 43). The date N.S. 788 is incised both on the brass *maṇḍala* and the *vajra*. A unique feature is the depiction of 12 animals on the body of the *maṇḍala* symbolizing a 12-year-cycle in Tibetan reckoning. During the rule of Pratāpamalla, the area of Svayambhūnāth was completely renovated with Tibetan funds, and an older, much defaced *maṇḍala*, now on the eastern side of Svayambhūnāth hill, was replaced by this new, Tibetan inspired one. The *chāḍya*/torus element (Figs. 23, 40) here is identical with the body of the *nāga* raising its head on the east side.



Fig. 43 - Svayambhūnāth: east side: *manḍala* N.S. 788.

Except for early non-figural *manḍala*-bodies and later figural ones, we find at Pāṭan two other forms which could be considered as intermediate steps between those groups.

The *manḍala* in Gujibāhā (P-248) rests on an unusual square socle, a flat incised band encircles the upper part of the octagon, but the *nāga* is missing (Fig. 44). Only one of the eight faces of the octagon, the one facing north, is equipped with a niche that encloses Lokeśvara holding two lotuses. The monument is dated N.S. 1000 (= 1880 A.D.).

Nearby and dedicated only three years later (N.S. 1003 = 1888 A.D.) is a *manḍala* with all the features of the standard type but with only 4 niches in the cardinal directions (Fig. 45):

N

Mañjuśrī

Lokeśvara

Maitreya

Vajrapāṇi



Fig. 44 - Gujibāhā: *dharmadhātumandala* N.S. 1000.



Fig. 45 - Gujibāhā: *dharmadhātumandala* N.S. 1003.



Fig. 46 - Cikañbahī: *dharmadhātumaṇḍala* N.S. 975.

A little older, but representing the same Four-Bodhisattva-type is a *maṇḍala* close to the temple in Cikañbahī (P-162) (Fig. 46), a still very active monastery, in traditional Bahī-style, where the cella can be circumambulated. The majority of *maṇḍalas* in Pāṭan belongs to the figural standard type, described above, with 8-Bodhisattva-arches.

Ukubāha, one of the older centers of Newar Buddhism, contains three *dharmadhātumaṇḍalas*. The oldest one, paired with a Licchavi caitya (Fig. 47), represents the same non-figural type as the examples from Yotālivicaitya and Pimbāhā. In N.S. 959 (= 1839 A.D.), however, the stone disc was covered by a brass plate and a *vajra*. It is possible that this date also refers to the donation of a metal lid for the neighbouring Licchavi caitya.

The second *maṇḍala*, near the entrance of the courtyard (Fig. 48), is undated and represents the standard type, the third one, dated N.S. 1039 = 1919 A.D. adds a second *nāga* between the octagon and *viśvapaḍma* and thus represents the last stage in our morphological sequence (Fig. 49).

A modern variant of the figural *maṇḍala* is to be found in Nākhacuk (P-86), where the body is covered with *aṣṭamaṅgalas* instead of Bodhisattvas (Fig. 50).

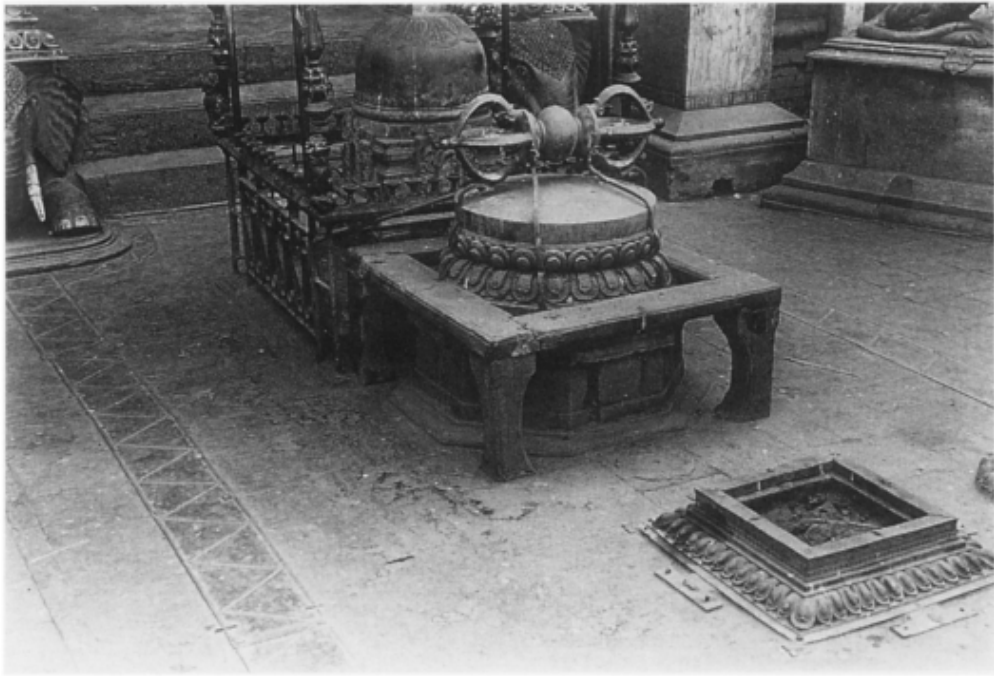


Fig. 47 - Ukubāhā: Licchavicaitya, *sa-vajra-dharmadhātumaṇḍala*, *yajñamaṇḍala*.



Fig. 48 - Ukubāhā: two *maṇḍalas* on northern side of courtyard.

Various Unique maṇḍalas

A small courtyard near Wanlābāhā (P-36) houses a *caitya* together with a *dharmadhātumaṇḍala*. Here, the body is undecorated, while the four Tathāgatas are seated in cardinal directions before the lower part of the *viśvapadma* (Fig. 52).

Nearby, just beneath the doorway of the Akṣobhya shrine of Wanlābāhā (P-36) stands the smallest *maṇḍala* that I have been able to find, measuring only 18 cm in diameter and surmounted by a *vajra*. The whole object is in cast metal (Fig. 53).

On the eastern side of Chyasal tole, one of the oldest quarters of Pāṭan, rests a *dharmadhātumaṇḍala*, the substructure of which is undecorated. The center is crowned by a figure of Śākyamuni/Akṣobhya in the round, looking in the western direction (Fig. 54).

In the courtyard of the Nhāy-kañbahī (P-14), 'one of the few well-preserved bahī complexes in Pāṭan (Locke 1985: 17) is a *dharmadhātumaṇḍala*, where the cardinal faces of the octagon are decorated with four Tathāgatas (East: Akṣobhya, South: Ratnasambhava etc.) and stylized lotus flowers on the intermediate faces (Fig. 55). Thus this seems to be the only case, where the standard image programme of later *caityas* (4 Tathāgatas) in the NSP was transferred to the *maṇḍala* body.

Unique in terms of workmanship is an example in Nhībāhā (P-43) where the *maṇḍala* proper is not incised, but appears in relief. Moreover, the well preserved image deserves our attention (Figs. 56, 57). Mañjuśrī sits in his central mansion (*kūṭāgāra*) surrounded by 8 figures seated on lotus petals. According to NSP 21 these figures seem to represent the 8 Uṣṇīṣas: Mahoṣṇīṣa, Sitātapatra etc. (Mallmann 1964: 82: *aṣṭa-dala-sthita*).

The innermost section of the *maṇḍala* is framed by three successive squares, the last of which is marked by tiny standing figures who should be understood as the 4 doorkeepers guarding the *garbhamaṇḍala*. At the centre of each side of the third square are pagoda-like pavillions flanked by *makaras* and *maṅgalas*. Five concentric



Fig. 49 - Ukubāhā: *dharmadhātumaṇḍala* N.S. 1039 (see also Fig. 47).



Fig. 50 - Nākhacuk: *maṇḍala* with *aṣṭamaṅgala* decor.

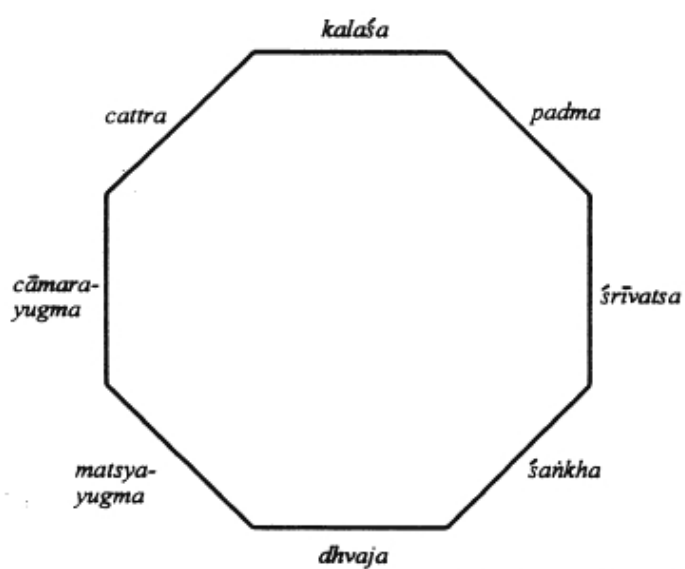


Fig. 51 - Disposition of *maṅgalas* on *maṇḍala* in Nākhacuk (P-86).



Fig. 52 - Wanlābāhā: *maṇḍala* with 4 Tathāgatas at *visvapadma*.



Fig. 53 - Wanlābāhā: miniature *maṇḍala*.



Fig. 54 - Chyasahtole: *dharmadhātumaṇḍala* with Buddha on top.



Fig. 55 - Nhaykanbahī: *maṇḍala* with Four-Tathāgata and floral decor.



Fig. 56 - Nhibāhā: *maṇḍala* proper in relief.



Fig. 57 - Nhibāhā: detail of Fig. 56.



Fig. 58 - Mikhābāhā: *maṇḍala* proper, partly in relief, partly incised.

rings of various petals, *vajras* and flames encompass this above mentioned figural, floral and architectural design.

A rare combination of incised and relief design, the latter technique used to enhance the importance of Mañjuśrī can be seen on a *maṇḍala* in Mikhābāhā (P-81) (Fig. 58).

The most recent *dharmadhātumaṇḍala* was consecrated in Nāgbāhā in July 1998 (Fig. 59). It is equipped with a metal *vajra*, a brass plate as *maṇḍala* proper (Fig. 60) and 3 surrounding lamp stands (*dalū*). Iconographical mistakes regarding the 8 Bodhisattvas are due to the fact, that the sculptor drew his inspiration from other *maṇḍalas* instead of referring to the only reliable source of information, NSP 2 and other *maṇḍala* texts. This is exactly the method by which original iconographic shortcomings lead to new ones.

In 1987 I published the oldest figure of Mañjuśrī in the Kathmandu Valley (Gail 1987), the Mañjuśrī in the eastern niche of Nāgbāhā-*maṇḍala* seems to be the most recent one (Fig. 61).

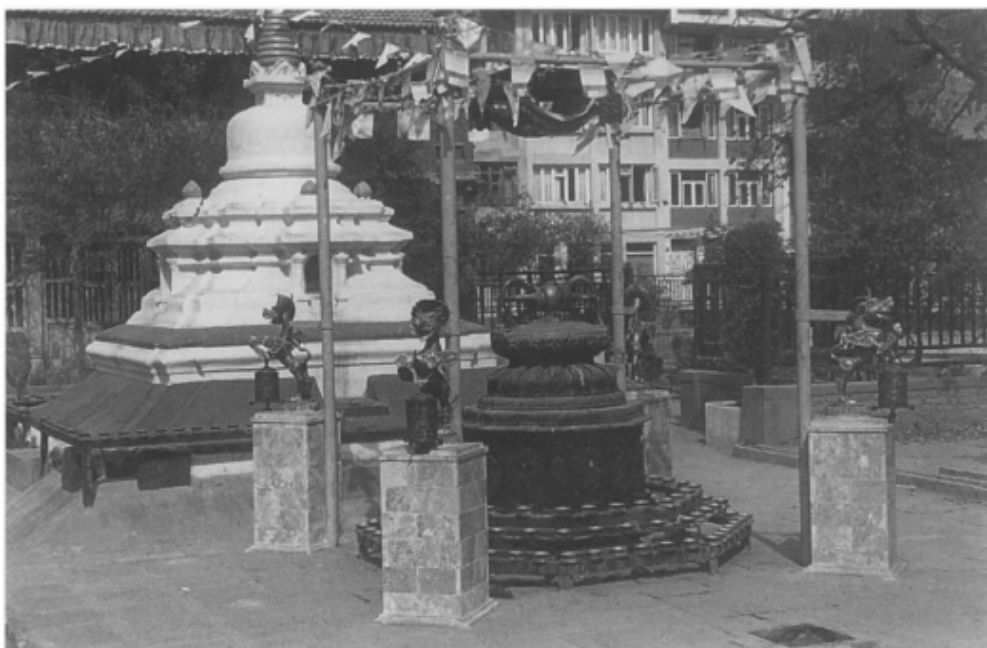


Fig. 59 - Nāgbāhā: new *maṇḍala* (1998 A.D.).



Fig. 60 - Nāgbāhā: detail of Fig. 59: *maṇḍala* proper.



Fig. 61 - Nāgbāhā: Mañjuśrī on body of *maṇḍala* (1998 A.D.).



Fig. 62 - Kīrtipur, Citubāhā: *dharmadhātumaṇḍala* with modern cage.

Kīrtipur and Bungamati

Buddhist establishments to the west and south of Pāṭan seems to have been dependent or influenced by the Pāṭan tradition.

In Kīrtipur a large octagonal *maṇḍala*, protected by a modern cage, can be found on the east side of the Great Stūpa (Citu or Cilañcobāhā — Fig. 62).

The position of the *nāga* ring is interesting since it does not encircle the *viśvapadma*, but replacing the Pāṭan *chādyā*, encircles the octagonal substructure, which is embellished by *aṣṭamaṅgalas*. The metal *maṇḍala* proper has no figural design at all, and Mañjuśrī himself is represented by a *viśvavajra* (Fig. 63).

These features are repeated in the branch monasteries Yākā- and Cwebāhā with the difference that a seated Mañjuśrī replaces in Yākābāhā a *maṅgala* on one face of the octagon (Fig. 64).

Two rather flat square *maṇḍalas* can be seen in the Cītubāhā compound. Here, pairs of Tathāgatā-*vāhanas* flank a stone carpet on each face of the socle. Fig. 65 shows two *mayūras* (of Amitābha) on the western and two *aśvas* (of Ratnasambhava) on the southern face.

The *maṇḍalas* in Bugamati follow the Pāṭan tradition with eight Bodhisattvas, one of them might represent the older phase of undecorated substructures (Fig. 66).



Fig. 63 - Kīrtipur, Citubāhā: det. of Fig. 62: non-figural *garbhamāṇḍala*.

Dharmadhātumaṇḍalas in Kathmandu and Bhaktapur

In Kathmandu the Pāṭan tradition, conspicuous in high, three-dimensional *maṇḍalas* on an octagonal base is almost absent. Much more common are flat stone or metal discs with lotus design, embedded in the floor of the courtyard or in front of a monastery (Fig. 67, brass *maṇḍala* in Janabāhā, middle axis between the entrance and doorway of the temple). In one case the disc was decorated with buddhapadas (Fig. 68, Makhanbāhā). A comparable piece from Pāṭan (Fig. 69, the Buddha's eyes have been added to his foot-prints).

A *dharmadhātumaṇḍala* on a square substructure decorated with *caturmahārājika* niches can be seen in the dilapidated Nhūcheñbāhā (K 215, Fig. 70).

The only octagonal specimen, decorated with *aṣṭamaṅgalas* and surmounted by a stone *vajra* seems to be a very recent dedication to the complex around the Kathesimbustūpa (K-28). It is the only *maṇḍala* among about 40 *caityas* (Figs. 71, 72).

The Pāṭan tradition of *dharmadhātumaṇḍalas* is completely absent in Bhaktapur. In Laskadyayābāhā (B-57) a flat stone *viśvapadma* (18 cm high) is mounted on a brick socle (Fig. 73). The *maṇḍala* proper (Fig. 74) is extremely defaced. Its only figural design is Mañjuśrī in the center. The same type of *maṇḍala* is found in Caturbrahmamahāvihāra (B-40), 38 cm high and 43 cm in diameter.



Fig. 64 - Kīrtipur, Yākābāhā: *dharmadhātumaṇḍala* with Mañjuśrī and *maṅgalas* on substructure.



Fig. 65 - Kīrtipur, Citubāhā: flat *maṇḍala* with Tathāgata-vāhana decor.

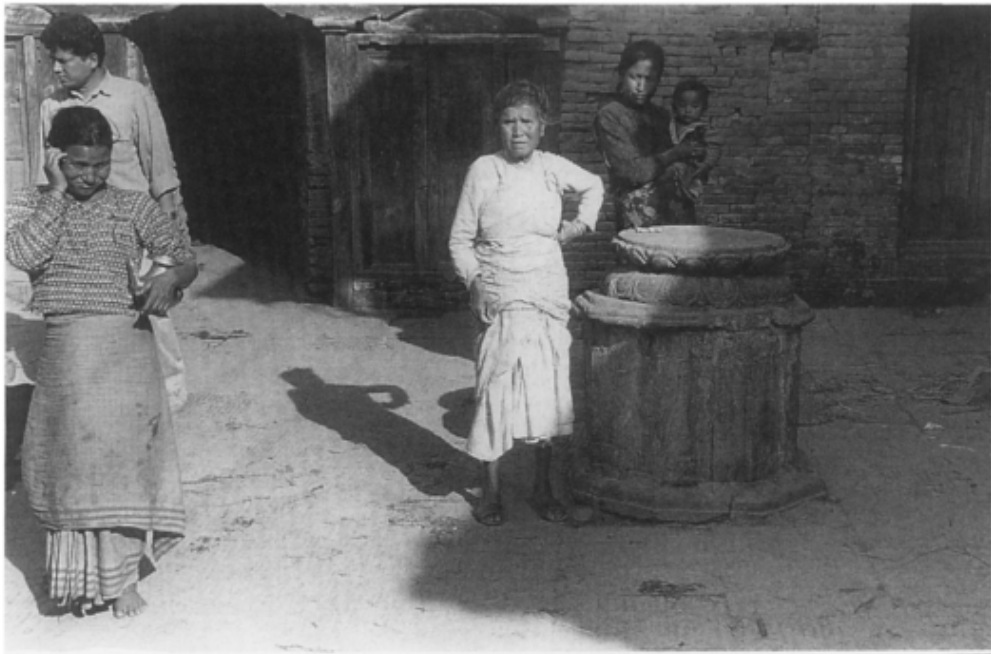


Fig. 66 - Buṅgamati: *dharmadhātumaṇḍala*.

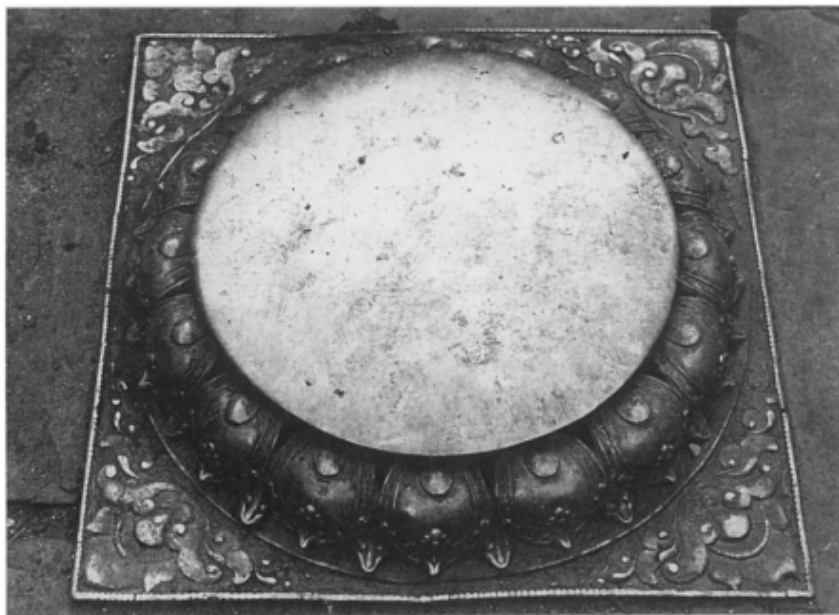


Fig. 67 - Kathmandu, Janabāhā: *padma* shaped *maṇḍala*.



Fig. 68 - Kathmandu, Makhanbāhā: *maṇḍala* with *buddhapadas*.



Fig. 69 - Pāṭan: *maṇḍala* with eye-decorated *buddhapadas*.



Fig. 70 - Kathmandu, Nhūcheñbāhā: *dharmadhātumaṇḍala* with square substructure.

Detailed Analysis of the maṇḍalas Proper (Uppermost Discs)

In addition to introductory remarks on the iconography of the *maṇḍalas* proper (the disc crowning the entire structure) we shall now analyse the largest and in terms of figurative decoration, most 'densely populated' specimens. All of them are manufactured in brass and are placed as a lid on the original stone *maṇḍala*. All of them form part of Bāhā courtyards at Pāṭan.

For our study I selected those which I was permitted to clean, and which exhibit the different tangible forms of the first or womb *maṇḍala* (*garbhamaṇḍala*).

The first *maṇḍala* was found in Padmāvāṭimahāvihāra or Nabāhā (P-52), between a larger and a smaller *caitya* (Fig. 75). The original *maṇḍala* from about 17th century A.D. — the substructure is without niches — was for very practical reasons furnished with a metal lid and additional sheet covering *viśvapadma* and *nāga* (Figs. 76-77).

The strong earthquake in January 1934 created a considerable fissure in the upper part of the *maṇḍala*. Thus making a virtue of necessity, the brass plate concealed the open wound of the monument. A member of the *saṅgha*, now 84 years old was an eye-witness of that event, and related those details to me.

Two brass *maṇḍala* discs from Ratnākaramahāvihāra (Habāhā, P-39) are dated N.S. 1018 (= 1898 A.D.) and N.S. 1064 (= 1944 A.D.) (Fig. 78 right and left).



Fig. 71 - Kathesimbhucaitya complex: painted *dharmadhātumaṇḍala* with *aśṭamaṅgala* design.



Fig. 72 - Kathesimbhucaitya complex: detail of Fig. 71.



Fig. 73 - Bhaktapur, Laskadyayābāhā: *dharmadhātumaṇḍala* and *caityas*.

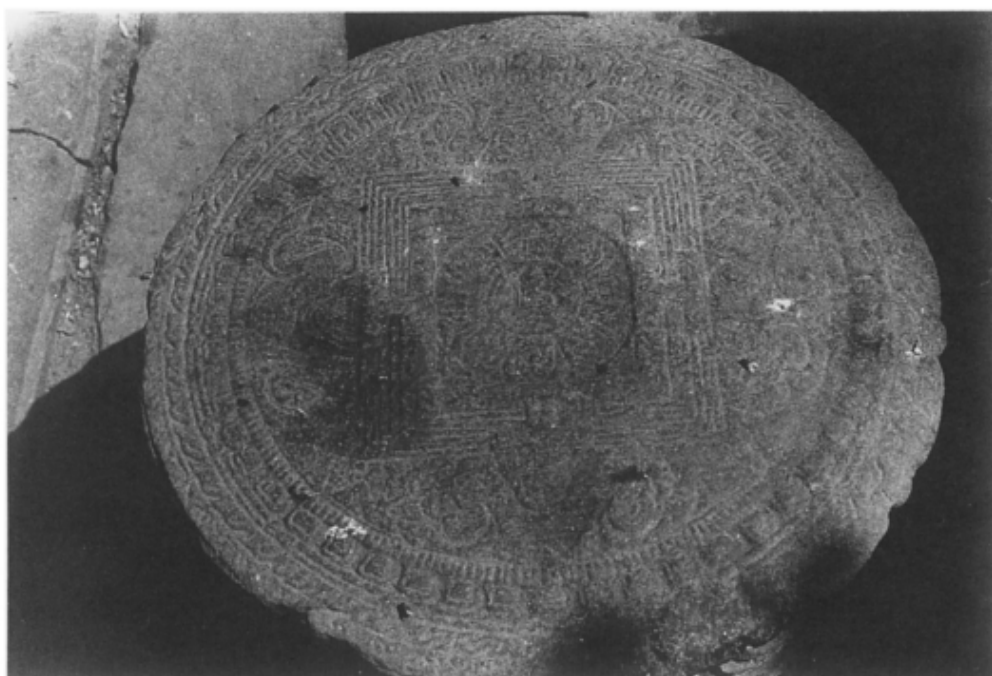


Fig. 74 - Bhaktapur: detail of Fig. 73.



Fig. 75 - Nabāhā (Padmāvatīmahāvihāra): *dharmadhātumaṇḍala* with metal cap.



Fig. 76 - Nabāhā: detail of Fig. 75: *maṇḍala* proper.



Fig. 77 - Nabāhā: detail of Fig. 76: *garbhamaṇḍala*.

In all three cases the border of the *garbhamaṇḍala* is demarcated by 4 gate-keepers each seated in the middle of a side of an inner square (Figs. 77, 79, 81).

With regard to the *garbhamaṇḍala*, NSP 21, pp. 54 f. enumerates Mañjuhoṣa (+ 8 Uṣṇīṣas), 4 Tathāgatas in the cardinal directions and 4 Tārās in the intermediate directions.

Maṇḍala 1 (Fig. 77) shows Mañjuhoṣa, 4-headed, 8-armed, sitting on a lion (NSP 21 *simhopari*) in a central medallion which is surrounded by 8 smaller medallions forming a larger circle. Although the deities are not individualized, it was not difficult to identify the multi-headed and multi-armed gods as the Tathāgatas in the respective cardinal direction, and the two-armed deities holding flowers, in the intermediate direction, as the four Tārās.

This observation holds good for *maṇḍala 2* as well, where, however, the 9 medallions are grouped in a square (Fig. 79). *Maṇḍala 3* depicts only Mañjuhoṣa in iconical form, the Tathāgatas are represented by 4 rosettes, the Tārās by four plain discs (Fig. 81).

Both *maṇḍala 1* and *2* show beyond the field with the 4 gate-keepers (*garbhamaṇḍala*) a square with 7 seated deities along each side and 4 standing deities in each corner (Figs. 77, 79). There is no comparable evidence in *maṇḍala 3*. Before further



Fig. 78 - Habāhā (Ratnākaramahāvihāra): 4 *dharmadhātumaṇḍalas* in courtyard (4th one behind the biggest one on right side).

interpreting this information we would first like to describe the other embellishment on the *maṇḍala*. The spandrels between the square and the next ring are filled with a pagoda, a pair of *makaras* and auspicious symbols on each side. The next ring contains 92 niches filled with uniform seated deities in *maṇḍala* 1 and 3, whereas the respective niches in *maṇḍala* 2 are empty. The usual concentric bands with petal-, *vajra*- and flame design (in case of *maṇḍala* 1 four additional gate keepers) complete our 3 *maṇḍalas*.

The decisive question now is: How are the additional *maṇḍalas* 2, 3 and 4 of NSP 21 represented in these three *maṇḍalā*-discs?

The NSP 21 enumerates altogether four *maṇḍalas* (*garbha*-, *dvitīya*-, *trītiya*-, *caturtha*-*maṇḍala*). The outermost one consisting of 97 non-Buddhist deities (+ 4 gatekeepers, mentioned already in the *garbhamaṇḍala*). This ring is most probably represented by the 92 niches in the brass *maṇḍalas* (+ 4 gatekeepers). The third *maṇḍala* of NSP 21 consists of 16 Bodhisattvas and the Krodhas (4 gate-keepers, 4 gods in the intermediate directions, 2 gods, one in zenith and one in the nadir position, 8 female deities flanking the gods in the intermediate directions). This makes a total of 34 deities. If we omit the two gods representing zenith and nadir (difficult to be positioned in a two-dimensional scheme) we arrive at 32 figures fitting in exactly with the number of deities in our second square.



Fig. 79 - Habāhā: detail of Fig. 78: *maṇḍala* proper of biggest *maṇḍala* N.S. 1018.



Fig. 80 - Habāhā: detail of Fig. 78: *maṇḍala* proper of left *maṇḍala*.



Fig. 81 - Habāhā: detail of Fig. 80: *garbhamaṇḍala*.

If this analysis can be accepted, the result is that the 2nd *maṇḍala*, consisting of 4 groups of rather insignificant deities was altogether omitted (12 Bhūmis, 12 Pāramitās, 12 Vaśitās, 12 Dhāriṇīs, and others) (NSP 21, pp. 61-63). The Hindu gods were represented, but by no means individualized.

Comparative Survey:

NSP 21		3 brass discs/ <i>maṇḍalas</i> proper
<i>garbhamaṇḍala</i> :	21 figures/Tathāgatas etc. 16 Bodhisattvas	13 figures/symbols
2. <i>maṇḍala</i> :	56 female deities	omitted
3. <i>maṇḍala</i> :	34 deities	32 deities
4. <i>maṇḍala</i> :	97 deities	96 deities/niches
	-----	-----
	= 224	= 141

Epilogue

Hardly more than 150 stone *maṇḍalas* on an octagonal basis exist in the Kathmandu Valley, to be more precise, in the Buddhist town of Pāṭan and in a few affiliated monasteries in the vicinity. The tradition of dedicating *dharmadhātuvāgīśvaramaṇḍalas* seems to have started only around the 17th century A.D. The actual inscribed dates begin from 1685 A.D.

Two *caityas* that belong to the complex of the Hiraṇyavarṇamahāvihāra — Ilānāicaitya — and of the Rudravarṇamahāvihāra — Yotālivicaitya — are equipped with a ring of labelled deities who form part of the above mentioned *maṇḍala* (NSP 21). This observation, thus, allows the interpretation that every post-Licchavi (= after the 9th century A.D.) *caitya*, depicting the 4 Tathāgatas in the cardinal directions, can be considered as a representation of the *garbhamaṇḍala* of the *dharmadhātuvāgīśvaramaṇḍala* which identifies Vairocana with Mañjuśrī and places the other 4 Tathāgatas in the *garbhamaṇḍala* (NSP 21, pp. 65, 54).

The substructure of a stone *maṇḍala* was plain (undecorated) in the beginning. It was only from the 18th century onwards that it was embellished in various ways, the standard type being the Eight-Bodhisattva one.

The *maṇḍala* disc — in contrast to *caityas* that never depict the central deity Vairocana/Mañjuśrī — emphasizes the inner *maṇḍala* with Mañjuśrī and his immediate entourage in contrast to the outer rings, in particular the peripheral one with the Hindu deities.

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